

1820

Letter to

Robertson of Glasgow

by Thomas

1820

Edinburgh

1827

A

XL
IV

16

XLIV. 16

last length
180/227
180/227

A
3044

LETTER

TO THE

FELLOWS OF THE ROYAL COLLEGES

OF

PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS OF
EDINBURGH,

RESPECTING THE PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH THE

CHAIR OF GENERAL PATHOLOGY
IN THE UNIVERSITY.

BY

WILLIAM THOMSON, M. D.

FELLOW OF BOTH COLLEGES.

EDINBURGH,

PRINTED FOR MACLACHLAN AND STEWART.

MDCCCXXXVII.

PRINTED BY NEILL & CO., OLD FISHMARKET.

NOTICE.

For the illustration of the points discussed in the following Letter, it has been thought advisable to prefix the two following documents.

No. I.

*MEMORIAL to the Right Honourable Lord MELBOURNE,
His MAJESTY'S Secretary of State for the Home Department.*

YOUR Memorialist begs leave to represent, that the Course of the Institutions or Theory of Medicine, as at present taught in the University of Edinburgh, comprehends three Branches of Medical Science,—Physiology, Pathology, and Therapeutics.

That from the progress which has been made, and is daily making, in Physiology and Pathology, each of these branches has become so extensive, as to render it impossible in one Course of Lectures of the ordinary Academic duration, to give a sufficiently full and comprehensive view of the various important subjects which they respectively embrace ; and, accordingly, it is well known that distinct Courses of Lectures on Physiology and Pathology have been established in many of the more celebrated Medical Schools of Italy, France, and Germany.

That though Physiology and Pathology, or the general doctrines of Health and of Disease, are in many respects connected with one another, yet the particular subjects of investigation in each of these branches, and the proper modes of prosecuting them, are so different, as to render it desirable for the promotion of medical knowledge, that they should be separately studied, and taught by separate Professors.

Your Memorialist begs leave farther to represent, that he has been for a long series of years diligently engaged in the study of Pathology, as relates both to the Structural and Functional derangements of the Human Body, and in particular, that he has procured from hospitals abroad and at home, with considerable pains and difficulty, and with much expense to himself, a large collection of Coloured Delineations of the Morbid Alterations of Structure, which occur in the different Textures and Organs of the Human Body.

That this mode of teaching Pathology, which he believes he has been the first to employ on an extensive and systematic plan, in lecturing on the Practice of Physic, would, if applied to a distinct Course of Lectures on Pathology in the University of Edinburgh, and with a reference to the specimens of diseased structure that are preserved in the Museums of the University and of the Royal College of Surgeons, convey to Students of Medicine much more correct notions of many diseases, and of the morbid appearances to which they give rise, than can possibly be done by verbal descriptions alone.

That your Memorialist is persuaded that a distinct Course of Lectures on Pathology, conducted on the plan he has suggested, would facilitate greatly the Study of Diseases, and render the Course of Medical Education in the University of Edinburgh more complete than it has hitherto been, without interfering with the proper duties or pecuniary interests of any of its Medical Professors.

In the event of your Lordship approving of the Institution of a Professorship of Pathology in the University of Edinburgh, your Memorialist humbly begs leave to offer himself as a Can-

didate for that Professorship, the duties of which, were he honoured with the appointment, it would be his highest ambition to execute, to the utmost of his power, for the promotion of Medical Science, and the advantage of the University.

Your Memorialist, &c.

JOHN THOMSON, M. D.

No. II.

COMMISSION to JOHN THOMSON, M.D., as Professor of Medicine and General Pathology in the University of Edinburgh.

WILLIAM the FOURTH, &c. &c. &c. WHEREAS We, considering that the branch of Medical Science termed Pathology, which teaches the General Doctrines relative to the Structural and Functional derangements of the Human Body, has, by the progress of medical knowledge, become one of great extent, and that its accurate study is of the utmost importance in a well regulated medical education, and considering also that the instituting a Professorship for that purpose in our University of Edinburgh will be of great utility; Therefore We, being desirous of giving all suitable encouragement to the same, have agreed to erect a Professorship in Our foresaid University of Edinburgh, under the name of "The Professorship of Medicine and General Pathology;" and being also well informed of the ability and good endowments of JOHN THOMSON, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, for the discharge of the duties of the foresaid office, We have nominated, presented and appointed, like as We by these presents nominate, present and appoint, the foresaid JOHN THOMSON to be Professor of

Medicine and General Pathology in the University of Edinburgh, during all the days of his life, granting full power to him to deliver Lectures thereon within the said University, to examine Candidates, and do every thing that may be required and necessary to the Graduation of Doctors of Medicine, as amply and fully, and with all the solemnities that the same is practised in that or any College or University whatever; and requiring hereby the Magistrates and Town-Council of Edinburgh, and the Principal and other Professors of the University, to admit and receive him to the peaceable exercise and profession of the said office, in the usual form.

Given at our Court at St James's, the 14th September
1831, in the second year of Our reign.

By His Majesty's command.

(Signed) MELBOURNE.

LETTER, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

YOU must all of you be, by this time, aware, that considerable discussion has recently taken place in the Town-Council, in the character of that body as Patrons of the University, respecting the expediency or in expediency of continuing the Chair of General Pathology, which was instituted a few years ago by the Crown, and the right of nominating to which was subsequently transferred to the Town-Council. In the course of that discussion, it has repeatedly been suggested, that the points at issue should be referred to the judgment of the Medical Profession, and particularly to that of the two learned Colleges to which you belong. Whether this suggestion will be ultimately adopted, I am unable to conjecture; but at all events, I am desirous to bring under your consideration the grounds upon which, if such a reference were made to and accepted by you, your judgment ought, in my humble opinion, to be founded.

In presuming to come forward on this occasion, I am influenced by two motives;—to shew the expediency of continuing a Chair for which I have offered myself as a candidate; and to vindicate those, at whose suggestion and upon whose recommendation the Chair was originally instituted, from those unworthy motives which have been recklessly attributed to them.

In discussing this question, it is impossible for me not to

feel that I am laid under great disadvantage by the circumstance, that the Medical Faculty of the University has come forward a second, or rather a third time, to express, in very decided terms, its opinion of the inutility and inexpediency of a separate Chair of General Pathology. The direct interest which the members of that body have in the welfare of the University, and the superior knowledge which they might be supposed to possess of the circumstances likely to promote or injure that welfare, must necessarily dispose the public to attach a high degree of importance to their opinion. You, however, gentlemen, cannot fail to be aware, that there are but few of the chairs which the present members of the Medical Faculty fill, with so much credit to themselves and so much reputation to the Medical School of Edinburgh, that have not, in their time, been subjected to as much obloquy and condemnation by the then existing members of the Faculty, as that for which I have now the honour to be an aspirant.

What the circumstances have been which have produced so great unwillingness as has on all occasions been evinced, on the part of the Medical Faculty, to the creation of new professorships, and to the extension of the course of study required from candidates for medical degrees, I shall not take upon me positively to assert; but, without wishing you to attach more importance to the fact than it may appear to you to deserve, I may remark, that it might easily be shewn that, in several respects, the members of that body have a pecuniary interest in the limitation of their number; and that, consequently, according to the ordinary principles upon which human evidence is received, their testimony must be admitted with a considerable degree of caution.

The main argument by which it has been attempted to establish the inutility of a separate Chair for teaching General Pathology is, that all the business which could properly devolve upon a professor of this branch is executed, or is capable of being executed, by the other professors of the Me-

dical Faculty. In reference to this argument, I need not suggest to you, that all those branches of knowledge which, in their combination and mutual illustration, constitute Medical Science, are each of them constantly enlarging their boundaries by the acquisition of new facts; and that consequently it is totally impossible to comprehend such a view of any of these subjects as requires to be exhibited to students, within the same bounds as were sufficient for that purpose at a less advanced period of their progress. The truth of this proposition might be illustrated by the history of every Medical School in the world. Having consisted at first of a very limited number of teachers, these have been gradually multiplied; and I believe I might with great truth aver, in whatever relation of cause or effect the circumstances ought to be considered, that the increased number of teachers, and the prosperity and reputation of the Schools, have borne a close relation to one another. In the Medical School of Paris, at present certainly ranking the highest in the world, the separate subjects of prelection are no fewer than eighteen in number, and to some of these subjects several professors are attached. In the University of Berlin, ranking next, I conceive, in estimation to that of Paris, there are no fewer than sixteen ordinary and ten extraordinary professors, besides fifteen private teachers attached to the University.

In the general extension of medical science, Pathology has fully participated. That term, in its widest signification, comprehends, as you are aware, every thing relative to the state of Disease. For the facility of teaching and of studying, it has been found convenient to make various divisions of this extensive subject. By the French the terms of External and Internal Pathology have been employed as synonymous with what in this country are denominated the Principles and Practice of Surgery and Physic. But this is a division totally distinct from that which has long been adopted, of Pathology into Special and General, though repeated attempts have been made to confound them by the opponents

of the Chair under discussion ; the first, or Special Pathology, being intended to comprehend the consideration of particular diseases as they occur in nature ; and the second, General Pathology, to include those more general facts or principles which result from the comparison of particular diseases with one another. General Pathology, though in its investigation obviously founded upon a knowledge of the Special, has, in teaching, been found to form a convenient and appropriate introduction to it ; just as, in other sciences,—Chemistry for example, it is convenient to give a general view of the principles which have been established, before entering upon the particular details the knowledge of which has led to the establishment of these principles, but of which details these principles, when once ascertained, very materially facilitate the comprehension and acquisition.

Accordingly, General Pathology was long considered as constituting a branch of that department of medical education, which has been designated indifferently by the titles of the Institutions or the Theory of Medicine. In this department, the student being supposed to have previously attained a sufficient knowledge of the structure of the human body, by the study of Anatomy, had his attention first directed to the consideration of the healthy functions of which the human economy is the seat of operation, or to that branch of medical science which is termed Physiology. In the second place, there was laid, or intended to be laid before him, a view of those general principles relative to disease, to which allusion has already been made, as constituting General Pathology. And, in the third place, under the head of General Therapeutics, similar general views were brought before the student, explanatory of the various actions of remedies upon the diseased economy, by which they assist Nature in restoring it to its healthy condition. All these branches of medical study were considered, as I have already remarked, as a necessary introduction to the study of the Practice of Physic.

But, since this system of medical education was devised,

each of the branches included under the Institutions of Medicine, has been gradually extending its limits. To meet the difficulties thence arising, three several expedients have been had recourse to, by those to whom the teaching of this department of medical education has been assigned ; *first*, to comprehend in their course of lectures a short and imperfect view of each of these three branches ; *secondly*, to dilate principally on one of them, and either to treat the other two in a cursory manner, or to omit one or both altogether ; and *thirdly*, in other instances, separate courses of lectures on these several branches have been delivered by the same, or by different teachers. On a diligent examination of the establishments for teaching in the medical schools of Europe and America, it would, I believe, be found, that no uniform principle has been followed in obviating the difficulties that have arisen, in teaching the Institutions of Medicine, from the increased extent of the different subjects which they comprehend.

I must now take the liberty to direct your attention to the questions, What the topics are that have usually been included, and that properly fall, under the province of General Pathology, considered as a part of the Institutions of Medicine ; and in what respects these may be supposed, in a proper system of medical education, to admit of or to require being taught in a distinct course of lectures. To arrive at a satisfactory conclusion upon these points, it will be necessary to consider more particularly the relations in which General Pathology stands to Special Pathology or the Practice of Medicine.

In the first place, then, I may remark, that under whatever point of view we consider the derangements of the human economy ; whether, with the clinical physician, we regard them as they present themselves in individual cases ; or, with the special pathologist, as constituting particular genera or species of diseases ; or whether, with the general pathologist, we endeavour to reduce them to their primary

elements ; in each case, they present precisely the same subjects for our investigation. These are, *1st*, the morbid phenomena or symptoms by which we become aware that derangements have actually occurred in the economy ; *2d*, the morbid agents by which derangements of the economy are liable to be produced ; *3d*, the more immediate seats of these derangements and their peculiar nature ; and *4th*, the morbid alterations discoverable in the structure of the body, in those who, during life, have exhibited derangements in the performance of their functions.

It is in the mode of considering these several subjects, therefore, rather than in the subjects themselves, that the distinction between General and Special Pathology must be looked for. In Special Pathology, symptoms, morbid agents, proximate causes, and organic lesions, are considered, respectively, in those combinations in which they give rise to, or occur in, particular diseases ; and attention is directed to them only in so far as they are calculated to elucidate the natural history of the particular disease that may be at the time under consideration. In General Pathology, on the other hand, the consideration of symptoms, of morbid agents, of proximate causes, and of organic lesions, or those branches of medical science which have been termed Symptomatology or Semeiotics, *Ætiology*, Pathogeny, and Morbid Anatomy, constitute so many separate bodies of pathological doctrine, in which the whole of the subjects falling under each department are methodically arranged and considered in reference to one another. It is easy to see how much more complete and satisfactory a view must be obtained of each symptom, morbid agent, proximate cause, and organic lesion, when treated of systematically in connection with other analogous phenomena, than when noticed incidentally in those varying combinations in which they present themselves to the special pathologist in tracing and in describing the histories of particular diseases. And if we reflect upon the circumstances under which the several subjects of pathological investigation

actually present themselves to the attention of the student of Special Pathology, in the consideration of a particular disease,—morbid functions, morbid structures, morbid agents, and proximate causes of disease, all of them combined in one whole, the relations of the several parts of which it is necessary for him as if intuitively to comprehend,—it must be obvious, that unless he shall previously have had an opportunity of taking a systematic view of each of these branches of pathological inquiry by itself, such as is afforded in the study of General Pathology, he cannot fail to be lost among the multitudinous and imperfectly understood matters which, simultaneously as it were, press themselves upon his attention.

But to give greater weight to these opinions respecting the importance of General Pathology, and its relations to the Practice of Medicine, I must still further trespass on your patience, by adducing the authority of Professor Chomel of Paris, himself the author of an elementary work on General Pathology, and than whom no physician stands higher in that capital as a sagacious special pathologist and skilful practitioner. “In the present state of our knowledge,” says M. Chomel, “Pathology presents to the student so vast a field, that it is impossible for the human mind to embrace its whole extent; the number of diseases described is in some sort immense, their species and their varieties are almost infinite; so that it may be affirmed without any exaggeration, that no man possesses all the pathological knowledge contained in the records of the art, even setting aside the consideration of theories and systems. This disproportion between the extent of the science and that of the human mind, has necessarily led to the result which it is easy to anticipate. Since it is impossible to enlarge the human mind, it has been necessary to divide in some sort the science of Medicine into several parts, the extent of which might be nearly in relation to our intellectual capacity. Hence the numerous divisions of Pathology, the most important of all being

that which distinguishes it into *internal* or medical, and *external* or surgical. Most of the others are only secondary divisions, such as the distinctions of physic and surgery into civil, military, and legal. The diseases of women, of children, of old persons, of a particular country, of a particular organ, &c. have also been the object of particular subdivisions; and men of very great merit have not disdained to devote themselves to the almost exclusive study of a single one of these orders of affections.

“ There is another division of Pathology, of which we have not spoken, because it differs from all those that have been enumerated: it is the division of Pathology into General and Special. This division has not, indeed, for its object to divide diseases into several classes, or to separate one series of morbid affections from all the others. Special and General Pathology, on the contrary, each of them bears reference to all diseases. General Pathology, which has for its object diseases considered in an abstract manner, and in reference to what they present in common, embraces the whole of them in one picture, in which we see all the points of contact which they have between one another, all the bonds by which they are united. Special Pathology equally comprehends the whole of them, but it presents them in a series of individual pictures, where each affection is delineated with the physiognomy that is peculiar to it, and which serves to distinguish it from all other diseases. Hence it is obvious, that there is no analogy between this division of pathology and those divisions of which we have previously spoken. These render the study more easy only by diminishing the number of things to be learned; the division into General and Special Pathology leads to the same result, without contracting the domain of the science; and not only does it preserve the whole of it, but it likewise presents, under two distinct and different aspects, each of the objects to which the attention and study of the medical man ought to be directed. General and Special pathology cannot be the subject-matters of

an exclusive study; the one serves as an introduction to the other; the knowledge of both is equally indispensable to the medical practitioner. This division is that the limits of which are best marked. Every consideration with regard to the phenomena common to diseases, belongs to General Pathology: every particular description of a disease belongs to Special Pathology. There exist, nevertheless, between these two branches of pathology numerous points of contact.

“ If the division of Pathology into General and Special, should appear to some persons more calculated to lengthen the study of diseases than to shorten it, it would be easy to recal them to a juster view of the subject. We shall admit with them that the knowledge of particular diseases is of the greatest importance, and that, to the physician engaged in practice, the study of General Pathology presents only an inferior degree of usefulness. But, at the same time, we must remark, that such a physician has not acquired the instruction which he possesses, without the aid of General Pathology, with which it is impossible for him to be unacquainted; and if it could be supposed, contrary to all reason, that the latter becomes entirely useless to him who knows, it cannot from this be legitimately concluded that it is unnecessary to him who learns. In fact, without speaking of the urgent occasion which the student of medicine has for familiarising himself, before every thing, with a new language, the study of General Pathology is for him, in other respects likewise, of the most evident utility. He is ignorant of every thing—he ought to learn every thing: diseases have forms which are common to them; they have features which are peculiar to them; hence, we ask, is it better to present, once for all, and thoroughly, to him who commences, the different points of pathological doctrine, and the phenomena common to most diseases, so as afterwards to have only to shew him the phenomena peculiar to each of them; or is it requisite to fatigue him by those useless and fastidious repetitions which are necessarily occasioned by the isolated description of each dis-

ease. In a word, is it better to explain a single time what is in common to all diseases, or to reproduce it to his eyes as many times as there are particular diseases. This is a point which does not admit of doubt.

“ The study of General Pathology presents also several other advantages ; it gives rise to considerations which are very well calculated to develope the understanding, and to enlarge the views of him who engages in it. It shews him from his commencement in his career, and in a narrow compass, the route which he has to traverse : it points out the objects which ought to attract his attention, and the dangers which he ought to avoid ; it shews him likewise the course which he ought to pursue in the study of particular diseases ; and, lastly, in comparing different morbid affections with one another, it is singularly well calculated to elucidate the history of each of them.”

When the Institutions of Medicine was first established in medical schools as a separate department of education, it does not seem to have been intended to comprehend under it any very particular view of what has been mentioned under the fourth head of the subjects of Pathological investigation, viz. the Morbid alterations of structure which the different textures, systems, and organs of the body are liable to undergo. This branch of medical science, now usually denominated Pathological Anatomy, had not, indeed, till within a comparatively recent period, made sufficient progress, to admit of its being reduced to any thing like general doctrines. Hence it is that in most of the treatises which have been published, and of the lectures which are delivered, under the title of General Pathology, it is the doctrines relative to the other three branches of pathological investigation which have been enumerated, viz. Symptomatology, *Ætiology*, and Pathogeny that engage, if not exclusive, at least the largest share of attention. You cannot fail to be aware how much the advancement which Pathological Anato-

my has made in recent times, is attributable to its having been rendered a subject of separate and systematic consideration, in particular treatises, independently of the other branches of medicine with which it is no doubt naturally allied. The works of Drs Baillie and Craigie, and of Mr Mayo, in this country ; of Andral and Lobstein in France ; of Voigtel, Conradi, Otto, and Meckel, in Germany ; and of Horner in America, may fairly be considered as all testifying the sense of the profession as to the advantage to be derived from treating Pathological Anatomy as a distinct subject of medical investigation. The same advantages which have resulted to medical science from the publication of distinct treatises upon Morbid Anatomy, are calculated, it is humbly conceived, to result to medical education, from a connected view of this subject in a course of lectures. You will perceive that in the Royal Commission, by which the chair now under consideration was created, the general doctrines relative to the Structural as well as to the Functional derangements of the human economy, are recognised as falling under its province ; and these, accordingly, have formed, as many of you are aware, a most extensive and important part of the courses upon General Pathology, which, during the last five years, have been delivered in the University of Edinburgh.

Were any additional testimony wanting to the importance of this branch of the business of the Chair of General Pathology, the most practical one, perhaps, would be to be found in the large sums which have been expended by individuals and by public institutions in forming museums for its illustration. In London, Pathological Anatomy now constitutes the object of a separate professorship at the University College, and conjointly with General Anatomy at King's College ; and it is likewise treated of in separate courses by eminent private teachers at different medical schools, as at Guy's Hospital, St Bartholomew's Hospital, the London Hospital, &c. At the University of Dublin, where the corps of Medical Professors is exceedingly small,

so that several distinct subjects are taught by the same individual, a separate course is delivered on Morbid Anatomy and Pathology. In Paris, notwithstanding the previous creation of a chair of General Pathology, on the recommendation of a commission appointed by the Minister of Public Instruction (of which Baron Cuvier was president, and a majority of the members of which were themselves medical professors in that school), a separate chair of Pathological Anatomy has, within these few years, been added to the school of medicine, on the foundation of the late distinguished surgeon M. Dupuytren, who, previously to his death, allocated no less a sum than £ 8000 for the endowment of the chair and the establishment of a museum, of which chair, conformably with the desire of the founder, that most distinguished pathologist M. Cruveilhier has been nominated as the first occupant.

That in our own school, the importance of affording to Students of Medicine a full and systematic view of the morbid alterations of structure liable to occur in the human body, has been fully understood, will appear from the following quotation :

“ In the University of Edinburgh,” remarks the present Professor of Anatomy, in the Introduction to his valuable work on the Morbid Anatomy of the Human Gullet, &c. “ the importance of Morbid Anatomy to the liberal and scientific study of medicine has always been sensibly felt ; and both my grandfather and father endeavoured, as far as their other duties allowed, to introduce the most prominent features of that science into their lectures on Anatomy, Physiology, and Surgery. But in a course of medical instruction, comprehending so wide a field of inquiry as had been assigned to their charge, even though the term of lecturing extended to six months, it may easily be supposed that only a small portion of time could be appropriated to a branch of the subject still overlooked or undervalued, and but too generally left, in the hurry for obtaining what was erroneously

conceived to be more essential information, to the research and experience of a more advanced period of life.

“ The opinions of professional men are now more enlarged ; and this department has become so interesting, and promises such valuable and extensive assistance to the healing art, that it can be treated with complete success only when it is converted into a distinct object of study. These considerations, strongly impressed on my mind by the practice of my predecessors, and by the general current of medical opinion, induced me to deliver a separate course of lectures on Morbid Anatomy, and to prepare the materials of the following work.”

To this very distinct statement I shall only add, that great as is the extent which Pathological Anatomy has now attained, it is not by that circumstance alone that the length of time necessary for giving a sufficient view of it to students, is to be measured. This is one of those branches of study in which it is especially necessary that the teacher should address himself to the understanding of his students, through their eyes as well as through their ears. He must not only bring before them the preparations or representations of Morbid Structure which he may have himself collected, or which may appertain to the institution of which he is a member ; but by comparing these with the best engravings illustrative of Morbid Structure that have been given to the public, he must make his pupils acquainted with the merits or defects of those standards with which, in prosecuting any department of Morbid Anatomy, they may have it in their power to contrast the results of their own observations. How much medical literature has been enriched of late years, not only by the multiplication of works of this kind, but by the improved style in which they are executed, those of Sandifort and Baillie, of Annesley, Bright, Carswell, Cooper, Cruveilhier, and Hope in Europe, and of Morton in America, to say nothing of numerous other less extensive publications, abundantly testify.

The two Chairs existing in the University of Edinburgh, in relation to which the expediency or in expediency of a separate Chair for teaching General Pathology, as comprehending the general doctrines relative to Structural and Functional derangements, require to be considered are, as appears from the foregoing remarks, those of the Institutions or Theory, and of the Practice of Physic. A suggestion has, indeed, been thrown out as to the expediency of conjoining the teaching of General Pathology with Clinical Medicine, a suggestion so obviously arising in a complete misapprehension of the objects of these two branches of study, as not to require a moment's consideration.

Against the duty of teaching General Pathology being again merged in the Institutions of Medicine, the simple and conclusive argument appears to me to be that which was stated by Dr Davidson, in his evidence before the Royal Commissioners for visiting the Universities and Colleges of Scotland, in speaking of the Chair of Theory of Medicine: "I conceive," said that learned and able physician, "that the task of this professorship should be confined to Physiology, or an account of the various healthy functions of the body, illustrated when necessary, by experiment. We have only to consider the number and importance of the subjects of this course, and the extensive labours of Haller, Adelon, Magendie, Bostock, &c. in order to conclude, that the science will give sufficient employment to the undivided attention of one teacher during five or six months, even supposing Physiology to be stationary. Progress, however, is making in this branch of medicine every day, not only by the discovery of new facts, but also by the new views, suggested by more accurate observation, correcting the fallacies of former established opinions. The science of Physiology, from its great extent and difficulty, will probably long continue wavering, and perplexed with uncertainty; so that, whoever teaches it, must be on the alert, in order to be acquainted with its advance or irregular movements, and to

make the students aware of all the improvements which are sufficiently substantiated." In the evidence delivered by my father relative to the same point, he remarked: "In many Universities, as in those of Paris, Vienna, Bologna, Pavia, Rome, &c. there is now a separate Professor appointed to teach Physiology; whilst in others, as in those of Berlin, Heidelberg, &c. the Professor of Anatomy gives a full and separate course of Physiology during the summer semestre or half-year. I may mention also, that Physiology has been taught in Edinburgh as a separate branch of study in courses of six months' duration, by two private lecturers, John Allen, Esq. now Master of Dulwich College, and the late Dr John Gordon; and each of these courses, it is well known, was productive of great advantage to the students, and contributed in no small degree to maintain and extend the reputation of the medical school of Edinburgh."

To the merging of the General Pathology in the Chair of the Practice of Physic, two very obvious objections present themselves; *first*, that though the history of particular diseases, and of the treatment which they require, be detached, as much as can possibly be done, from general pathological and therapeutical views, there will remain more than sufficient materials to occupy at least one course of lectures of the ordinary academic duration. Dr Davidson, in his evidence before the Royal Commissioners, at the same time that he suggests the propriety of a separate course of lectures on General Pathology, remarks, in relation to the class of the Practice of Physic, that "as a complete view of this subject has never been taken in this University, it seems to be impossible to discuss so important and extensive a subject in five or six months, so that the propriety of devoting a second course of lectures to it appears manifest." Numerous confirmations of this statement of Dr Davidson's with regard to the necessary extent of a course of lectures on the Practice of Physic might be collected from the evidence laid before the Royal Commissioners, as well as from the practice pursued at most, if not

all, of the Continental schools. But *secondly*, I may remark, that though it were possible for the Professor of the Practice of Physic to discuss incidentally, in the course of his consideration of particular diseases, some of the doctrines of General Pathology, this would not effect what M. Chomel has so well pointed out as the leading object of this branch of medical science, that, namely, of serving the student as an introduction to the study of Special Pathology ; an object, indeed, which can be accomplished only by erecting it into a distinct branch of medical education.

I am far from meaning to assert, that none of the topics which fall to be discussed in a course of lectures on General Pathology are likely, or ought, to be commented on by the Professors of other branches. But in the first place, it is probable that the views under which the professors of different branches will consider the same subjects, will in general be different. In the second place, they are likely to be discussed more fully in a course of which they constitute the proper and essential business, than in one in which they are only noticed incidentally. And in the third place, it is quite possible that, in some instances at least, the different professors, in viewing a subject from the same direction as it were, may pronounce different opinions with regard to it. There is no subject of education in regard to which similar interferences must not occur between the teachers of its different branches. And it would be just as reasonable to propose, to abolish the Chair of Anatomy, because the different professors of Medicine, and particularly those of Physiology and of Surgery, must necessarily introduce a great deal of anatomical detail into their several courses, as to abolish that of General Pathology, on the plea that the subjects appropriated to it are inseparably connected with several other established departments of medical instruction, and most profitably taught in connection with them.

Were it allowable for me to obtrude upon your attention

any further observations respecting the alleged interference of the Chair of General Pathology, with others existing in the Medical Faculty, I might easily shew the applicability to the matter now under discussion, of the following portion of the Argument, in which the present professor of *Materia Medica* vindicated, before the Royal Commissioners, the claims of the chair of Medical Jurisprudence, which he then occupied, to be added to those of the Medical Faculty. “To sum up the whole then,” said he, “a vast proportion, nine-tenths, at least, of my course is either not touched on at all, or is discussed in a totally different manner, and with totally different views, by the present professors of the Medical Faculty. In truth, the identity between my lectures and theirs consists in the titles, not in the essence of the subjects, and, therefore, no more entitles any one to say that I teach only what they teach, than to say, that the professors of Natural History, *Materia Medica*, and Chemistry, lecture on the same subjects, because they lecture on the same substances. The Right Honourable Commissioners will probably be a little surprised, when I add the following supplementary argument used by my few opponents in the Senatus, in stating the objection that has led to the preceding details. It has been alleged, that the present Faculty professors *may* teach Medical Jurisprudence, by each taking to himself any portion that can be construed as bearing a reference to the subject of his professorship. Regarding this proposal, I shall say nothing farther than a word or two as to its practicability. That it is possible, in one sense, I admit; the science may be partitioned: there is hardly a single subject of lecture in the present Faculty, which might not be partitioned and taught in like manner. But whether it is possible in another sense, the Right Honourable Commissioners will easily judge, when I inform them, that by the common consent of every dispassionate man in the profession, the professorships of the Practice of Physic, Surgery, Chemistry, and *Materia Medica* (among whom my subject would fall

chiefly to be distributed), are already overloaded with matter far beyond the compass of the University course ; and that, in point of fact, the professors of the Practice of Physic and of Materia Medica, for at least twenty years past, have never completed in a session their course, even as it now stands ; while the professor of Chemistry cannot complete his, without lecturing two hours daily for about three weeks, towards the close of the session. Surgery, for want of a separate professorship, has never been fully taught in this University ; but pure Surgery is now a vast field, not less extensive than pure Physic. In conclusion, I have to add, that although I have said nothing of the topics peculiar to the other department of my professorship, Medical Police, because I have not completed my lectures on it, it would nevertheless be easy for me to shew, as in regard to Medical Jurisprudence, that many topics are really quite peculiar, and the greater number of the rest common to the professors of the Faculty of Medicine only in name, and not in substance."

In urging the propriety of a separate course of lectures on General Pathology constituting a portion of a regular and scientific medical education, I shall not deny that this *might* be delivered by a professor who was at the same time engaged in teaching some other branch of medical education. In the evidence delivered before the Royal Commissioners by my father, of date 23d January 1827, in which the separation of the Institutions of Medicine into distinct courses of Physiology and Pathology, was first proposed, it was suggested that, " if it should be considered inexpedient to institute an additional professorship on the Theory of Medicine, the Physiology should be delivered during one session, and the Pathology during another, these being obviously branches of Medical Science of so great extent and importance, as not to admit of being comprised in a single course of six months' duration."

But I may be permitted to remark, that in judging of the extent of subject which ought to be committed to a teacher,

it is proper to keep in view the demands on his time required not merely by the business of academical instruction, but by the original acquisition of the information which is to form the staple of his lectures, and frequently, also of the Apparatus, of whatever nature that may be, by which these lectures are to be illustrated ; as well as by the necessity of his keeping progress with the extension of information in his own particular department, not only at home but in all parts of the civilized world ; and by those communications to the public upon which not only his own reputation, but that of the school with which he is connected, must mainly depend. Nor is it unworthy of consideration how important an influence must be exercised in any country, upon the cultivation of particular branches of scientific inquiry, by the circumstance, whether or not suitable provision is made for their being taught in the National Seminaries. It is in these institutions that for the most part, the mental tendencies of the youth receive their first and most durable direction ; it is often to a situation in these seminaries that individuals look forward as the recompense for devoting their attention to particular branches of scientific inquiry, as well as for the means of continuing their prosecution ; and in this way the existence of such appointments not unfrequently engenders that abundance or superabundance of publications on particular subjects, which, on superficial consideration, might be supposed to supersede their necessity.

If you shall concur in the opinions expressed in the following quotations from two medical journals published on different sides of the Atlantic, I think you will be disposed to believe, that the deficiency in English medical literature which they join in lamenting, must be considered as mainly attributable to the want of such professorships in our medical establishments, as that to which, after a very brief, but certainly not an inactive, period of existence, in the University of Edinburgh, it is now proposed to put an end.

In the second volume of the Dublin Medical Journal

(1832), in giving a notice of three text-books upon General Pathology, by professors in German universities; those namely, of Conradi of Gœttingen, Hartmann of Vienna, and Friedlander of Hallé; the reviewer takes occasion to observe —“ We have long remarked with regret how very deficient English medical literature is in introductory treatises on the various branches of the science. It cannot be denied that we are far behind our continental brethren in this respect.” “ For instance, in the branch before us, the only work of the kind we possess is, ‘ Gregory’s *Conspectus Medicinæ Theoreticæ*,’ an admirable work, certainly, for the time at which it was written, and one that may still be read with much advantage, as it gives an excellent digest of all that was then known or believed, and is written with truly classical taste. It contains a compendium of the elements of Physiology, Pathology, and Therapeutics; and, therefore, cannot be fairly compared with a distinct treatise on any one of these subjects, as they are necessarily treated in a more brief and cursory manner in the one than in the other. It is now upwards of half a century since it appeared, and yet no one has since been found in these kingdoms to write a more modern work of the same kind. How different the case is on the continent, the three enumerated at the head of this article are of themselves sufficient to shew.”* And in a note the reviewer adds, in referring to two English works (those of Drs Parry and Pring), published with the title of Pathology, “ it may be asked, are not these works instances to the contrary of our assertion? We readily reply they are not. Neither of them can be called introductory works, as they presuppose an acquaintance with the technical language and general doctrines of the science.”

In a notice of the work of the late Professor Hartmann of Vienna, contained in the *American Journal of the Medical*

* Amongst others, the reviewer might have added to his list of text-books on General Pathology, those of Gmelin of Tübingen; Van Coetsem of Ghent; Fanzago of Padua; Buffalini of Bologna, and Volpes of Naples.

Sciences, for November 1830, the reviewer concludes with the following observations:—"In short, we will venture the assertion, that Professor Hartmann's treatise on General Pathology, is the ablest that we have seen in any language. In the English we have no work on the subject, and this defect has so long existed, and so little attention has been paid to this department of study, that we think we are borne out by fact when we hazard the assertion, that there are many students who have passed through the usual terms of study, and yet could scarcely enumerate the objects of General Pathology. In all other civilized countries, this important branch is enjoined upon the student as an indispensable part of his collegiate course, and we accordingly find, that in almost all the languages of Europe, except the English, numerous treatises of high merit have been published upon the subject. May we not hope, then, that this neglect may soon cease to exist in our own country, and that the subject ere long may secure that attention which its importance deserves; and that we shall be no longer exposed to an imputation which reflects so much discredit upon our national medical literature. A work somewhat on the plan of Professor Hartmann's, but drawn up in accordance with the present improved state of the science, would be an invaluable acquisition, and he who shall furnish such a one, will deserve well of his country."

In concluding this review of the objections urged against the continuance of the Pathology Chair upon the ground of its alleged inutility, I beg leave to submit to you, *first*, that General Pathology, comprehending the general doctrines both of Structural and Functional derangements, does admit of being taught as a distinct branch of Medical science; and, *second*, that in a liberal system of medical education, it is desirable that it should be so taught, not only from the number, extent, and importance of the subjects which it brings under the consideration of the student, but also as a means of facilitating the acquisition of other branches of medical study, and of enabling the Professors of these other branches

to give a fuller view of their several subjects, than without such preparation on the part of their students, it is possible for them to do. I am the more anxious to point out distinctly the great advantage which a medical student is likely to derive from the study of General, as a prelude to that of Special Pathology, because I believe that this is too apt to be overlooked, even by medical men, unless they shall have made the principles of medical education a subject of particular consideration; and to this circumstance, I am convinced, must be attributed much of that diversity of opinion with regard to the utility of the Chair in question, which is said to prevail among the members of the medical profession themselves.

A second and subsidiary argument against the continuance of the Chair of General Pathology, which has been much relied on in the course of the present discussion, has been to the effect, that there are many Medical Schools in which there does not exist any corresponding professorship, nor any separate provision for teaching this branch of medical science. The parties, however, have not agreed in the extension which they have given to this affirmation,—some having limited it to the medical schools of Great Britain and Ireland, whilst by others it has been extended to those of the whole of Europe. From this affirmation in its more extended or more limited application, a double inference is deduced, first, that a branch which has been treated with so much neglect in other schools of medicine cannot be one of paramount importance; and secondly, that the addition of this class to the medical curriculum of the University of Edinburgh, while it is not required of candidates for the Medical degree by similar institutions elsewhere, must tend to diminish the number of those who repair to Edinburgh for the purpose of obtaining that honour.

I shall, in the first place, consider the affirmation in reference to the proof which it may be supposed to afford, that General Pathology, as including the general doctrines of

Structural and Functional derangements, is, at other Medical Schools, considered an unimportant, superfluous or useless branch of medical education.

While I willingly admit that there are some very important points in which the Medical Faculty of the University of Edinburgh would do well to take an example from certain of the other Universities in these kingdoms, I must confess, that I am at a loss to understand to which of these institutions it is proposed that this University should look, as the model or guide by which its *medical* establishment and its system of *medical* education are to be regulated. Is it to the standard of Oxford, Cambridge, or St Andrews, that the number of medical chairs in this University ought to be diminished? Will the Professor of the Theory of Physic admit it as a suitable reason for his chair being reduced to the station of a lectureship, that such is the footing upon which it at present stands at Glasgow; or will the Professors of Clinical Surgery and Medical Jurisprudence allow, that attendance on their classes is an improper burden upon the students, because in the University of Glasgow there exist neither professorships nor lectureships for these branches. The members of the Medical Faculty may be surprised to learn, what nevertheless is true, that among the students attending the University of Glasgow, there exists a strong desire for the institution of a Chair of Pathology in that school. And they may be still more surprised to learn, what I believe on inquiry they will find to be the case, that the Medical Faculty of the new London University, consisting of gentlemen unconnected with the business of teaching, and whose judgments in such matters therefore are not liable to be biassed by personal interests, have agreed to require Pathological Anatomy, as a separate course, from those who are to be admitted to examination for medical degrees before their board. To what changes this determination on the part of the Metropolitan University will give rise in the establishments of other Medical Schools in these kingdoms, remains to be seen; but the University of Edinburgh would certainly

be placed in an untoward situation were its anathema upon this branch of medical education to go forth to the public at the same time as the recognition of its importance by a certainly not less competent nor less unprejudiced tribunal.

I must be pardoned for presuming to express my opinion, that, if the members of the Medical Faculty of the University of Edinburgh could be prevailed upon to direct their attention more to the improvements which other similar institutions are introducing into their systems of medical education, and to rely less for public preference on those points in which they are conscious of being superior to their rivals, they would materially improve their chances of maintaining the ascendancy which they have so long enjoyed.

As to the practice of Foreign Schools in regard to the teaching of General Pathology, Structural and Functional, I may remark, that their usages are for the most part entitled to much greater weight than those of similar institutions in this country ; because, in most European States, the course of study to be pursued by candidates for medical degrees and privileges being regulated by the government, it is submitted from time to time to the revision of persons competent to judge how far it is conformable to the existing state of Medical Science, and consequently is not so liable as in this country to be made subservient to the petty interests of professors and private teachers.

I am unwilling to-obtrude upon you a tedious detail of particular examples, but, in general, I may mention, upon the authority of the programmes annually issued by the different Universities on the Continent, of the most recent *statuta solennia* of these Universities which have fallen under my notice, and of those authors who have written expressly on the state of Medical Education in different European nations, that in most of the continental schools, and more particularly in those of Germany and Italy, distinct courses of lectures are delivered on General Pathology, either separately or in connection with General Therapeutics ; and that in most Continental States attendance on such a course is prescribed as a necessary

qualification to candidates for medical degrees. Such is the case amongst others in the Universities of the Prussian, Austrian, and Russian dominions, and it surely will not be alleged that the Medical Establishment of the University of Edinburgh should be inferior to those of the Universities of Greifswald, of Pest, and of Cracow. I cannot pretend to say what portion of the courses delivered under this title in the respective continental schools is occupied, agreeably to an observation formerly made, in the consideration of Symptomatology, *Ætiology*, and Pathogeny, and what portion in that of Morbid Anatomy ; but I know that in a considerable number of the continental schools, in addition to the courses given under the title of General Pathology, separate courses upon Morbid Anatomy are delivered.

After this slight view of the question, whether the inutility of a separate Chair of General Pathology can be inferred from the practice of other schools, I must turn your attention to the second portion of the argument, viz. That as other institutions with which the University of Edinburgh comes into competition, in the business of granting degrees, do not require attendance on a course of lectures on this subject, the effect of such attendance being required by this University must be to induce students to seek their degrees elsewhere, or to content themselves with more humble certificates.

The only University at present in operation in these kingdoms, which can be supposed to withdraw from the University of Edinburgh students of medicine desirous of obtaining degrees, is that of Glasgow. That the number of classes, attendance on which is required by that University from candidates for its medical degree, is inferior to what is required in Edinburgh, cannot be denied ; but I think it may reasonably be questioned, whether this be the most powerful motive which weighs with persons not residing in the vicinity of either institution, in making their selection, to which to apply for a degree. The circumstance, that at Glasgow attendance on

the lectures of London teachers and on those of the professors of the College of Surgeons of Dublin is recognised, while in Edinburgh such attendance is of no avail, in the business of graduation, may be supposed to weigh with a much larger number of students, than the exemption from a small number of additional classes. It is, indeed, a somewhat mortifying supposition on the part of the members of the Medical Faculty of the University of Edinburgh, and I therefore trust an erroneous one, that there is so little difference in the public estimation of their medical degree and that of rival Universities, that students, in balancing the motives of preference, should have their choice determined by so inconsiderable a cause.

The Licensing Board with which the Medical Faculty of the University of Edinburgh comes most directly in contact, is the Royal College of Surgeons of this city; and it is well known to those who have paid attention to the progress of medical education at this school, that, in no small number of instances, the College of Surgeons has taken the lead of, and shewn the example to, the University, in the introduction of improvements into its system of medical education. And when the Medical Faculty are exclaiming so loudly as to the danger of driving away students from their doors, by imposing upon them excessive burdens in the way of attendance upon courses of lectures, it may be well to inquire in what respects the education required by the University from candidates for its degree, is, at the present time, more extended than that required by the College of Surgeons from candidates for its diploma. Each of these bodies requires attendance upon courses of Anatomy, Chemistry, Materia Medica, the Theory or Institutes of Medicine, Practice of Medicine, Midwifery and the Diseases of Women and Children, Surgery, Clinical Medicine, Clinical Surgery, Practical Anatomy, and Medical Jurisprudence. The University requires General Pathology, Botany, and Natural History, which are not required by the College of Surgeons; and

the College requires Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Practical Chemistry, which are not required by the University; but the College of Surgeons further imposes on its candidates attendance for two courses on each of two branches of study, viz. Anatomy and Surgery, whilst no secondary attendance is enforced by the University; so that, whether we consider the number of subjects embraced, or of courses prescribed in the curricula of these two bodies, there certainly does not appear to be any predominance in that of the University.

Does the degree of M. D. confer, or is it intended to confer, a higher status upon its holder than the simple diploma of a Surgeon? Is it not supposed to infer higher attainments, resulting out of a more extended education? I presume you will agree with me in answering these questions in the affirmative. But it is obvious from this comparison of the curricula of the University and the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, that, so far as they are concerned, no such difference at present exists.

It has, I find, been attempted to be inferred that the College of Surgeons must attach little importance to General Pathology as a branch of medical education, seeing that it is not included in the curriculum of study which it prescribes. In reference to this, it may be proper to state, *1st*, that the curriculum of the College has not been revised since 1829, at which time the Chair of General Pathology did not exist. *2d*, That in the adoption of that curriculum, the College placed itself, by no fewer than four medical courses, in advance of the University, besides requiring regular instruction in the Elements of Mathematics, and attendance on a course of Mechanical Philosophy; by which last measure the College, in opposition to the evidence that had been delivered to the Royal Commissioners by the members of the Medical Faculty of the University, laid a foundation for requiring a scientific education in candidates for its diploma. *3d*, I may observe, that the College evinced its opinion as to the extent

which may advantageously be given to a course of lectures on Physiology, by admitting a six months' course on this subject, in lieu of the class of Theory of Medicine; and that they testified their sense of the importance of one department at least of the Pathological Chair, by "strongly recommending to students to avail themselves of the opportunities which they may possess of attending lectures on Botany, Natural History, Comparative Anatomy, and *Pathological Anatomy*, in addition to the courses of lectures absolutely required by the above regulations." It is not undeserving of mention, that at the time of this recommendation being issued, the students had no opportunity, at this school, of attending a course of lectures on the last mentioned subject, the Chair of General Pathology not having been created for two years afterwards; and that, but for such a course being rendered imperative, either by the University or by the College itself, they were not likely soon to enjoy such an opportunity. That I am warranted in this inference I feel confident you will allow, when you consider how much expense must necessarily be incurred in making adequate provision, in the way of drawings and preparations, for the proper illustration of a course of lectures on Pathological Anatomy.

It is not to be forgotten, too, that at the time when the classes of General Pathology and Surgery were added by the Crown to the Medical Curriculum of the University, the students had it in their option to select any two of the following classes they might think proper, viz. Practical Anatomy, Natural History, Legal Medicine, Clinical Surgery, and Military Surgery. Subsequently to the addition of the Pathology and Surgery, the four first of these classes were rendered imperative, that is, the number of classes to be attended by candidates for graduation was, on the recommendation of the Medical Faculty itself, farther increased by two. If they are really too many, a proposition in support of which I have never as yet heard any sufficient argu-

ment or evidence, and which I feel confident from the general tone of the Report of the Royal Commissioners, would not have been admitted by them, it seems a primary question for consideration, whether any of the other classes may not with more propriety be dispensed with than that of General Pathology.

It has, I understand, been alleged, that the students attending the University of Edinburgh have their minds *distracted* by the number of subjects to which, in passing through the prescribed Curriculum, they are obliged to give attention. But, first, I am disposed to believe, that if such distraction does occur, it must be mainly owing to the want of a methodical arrangement of the course of study ; and, secondly, I may remark, that whatever repetitions a student may be subjected to, by attendance on a course of Lectures on General Pathology, it cannot possibly be alleged that such a course can have the effect of withdrawing him from the proper path of his pursuits. So far, indeed, from distracting him, its natural and necessary effect must be materially to aid in *composing* his mind, by enabling him to reduce, under general principles, the particular facts relative to disease, which are pointed out to his attention by his different teachers.

Connected with the more limited question respecting the propriety of rendering attendance upon this particular class imperative upon students, is the more general one as to the principles upon which the extent of education required by the University of Edinburgh from candidates for its medical degree, should be determined. I am not, and I trust, whatever may be my future relation to the University of Edinburgh, I never shall be one of those who assent to the doctrine that that Institution, in fixing the conditions of granting its degree, should be mainly guided by the principle of raising them as little as possible above the level of those exacted by other bodies which are authorized to grant medical degrees or licences to practise. I am well acquainted with the argument by which it has been attempted to hide the

selfish character of this policy under a specious pretence for the public interest ; but after the thorough exposure which this so-called argument received at the hands of the Royal Commissioners, and of the Chairman of the Committee of the House of Commons on Medical Education, I confess I have been not a little surprised at the temerity with which it has been repeated in the proposal lately submitted by the Medical Faculty to the consideration of the Patrons of the University.

“ An idea,” it is remarked in the General Report of the Commissioners, “ seems to be entertained by persons of great respectability, that the character of the Universities, as schools of medicine, is to be measured by the number of degrees which are conferred by them ; and that, if any considerable extent of previous education were required, fewer persons would apply for them, licences to practise would be obtained elsewhere, and the number of students attending the Universities would be greatly diminished. But while we would not be satisfied of the sufficiency of this objection, even though the principle of it were well founded, and humbly think that it would go far to sanction laxity of examination in general, we are of opinion that it is not correct in principle, or at all supported by experience. It appears to us that the reputation of a University does not depend on the *number* of the degrees which are granted by it, but must depend entirely on the nature of the qualifications which the possession of such degrees implies in the persons on whom they are conferred ; and, being satisfied of the truth of this proposition, we see no good ground for thinking that, by raising the value of the degree in medicine in the Scotch Universities, we shall thereby lessen the demand for it. On the contrary, the only consequences which we can anticipate from any regulations reasonably laid down for this object, are, that the students will come to the study of medicine better prepared to profit by the instructions they receive, and that there will be a more general desire to obtain a degree in

these Universities, when it has thus been rendered the more sure introduction to professional success or eminence.

“ If any doubt, however, could have remained in our minds on this important subject, it would have been entirely removed by the evidence as to the effect of the changes introduced by the *Senatus Academicus* of the University of Edinburgh; and by certain papers transmitted to us by the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh, and the evidence relating to them. It certainly appears, that, in the University of Edinburgh, the number of candidates for medical degrees has constantly increased, in proportion as improvements were introduced for raising the qualifications, and adding to the strictness of examination; and in particular, since the last change in the laws, which prescribed a curriculum of medical study of four years, instead of three years, the demand both for instruction by attendance at the University, and for the degree, has decidedly increased. The College of Surgeons, in like manner, who give diplomas in Surgery conferring a right to practise, have successively enacted new regulations, uniformly requiring more extensive and perfect education in those who apply for them; and it is clearly ascertained by their experience, that instead of those improvements deterring any number of persons from presenting themselves for trial, the candidates have been more numerous in proportion as the rules have been made more strict, inso-much that the College have not hesitated to extend the qualifications, by improved regulations, so lately as July 1829.”

Such, gentlemen, are the grounds upon which I presume to think (and venture to believe that you will agree with me in opinion), that General Pathology, in the sense annexed to it in the Commission issued to the present Professor by the Crown in 1831, ought to form a branch of education in every University, which pretends to impose a sufficient course of study upon candidates for its medical degree. I need not say that the immediate inferences which I am desirous that

you should deduce from this statement are, *first*, that those with whom the responsibility rests, of having recommended, and of having created, the Chair of General Pathology in the University of Edinburgh, are not amenable to those censures which they have incurred at the hands of persons not possessing the information requisite to enable them to form a correct judgment upon the subject ; and, *secondly*, that were the Town Council to apply to you for your opinion as to the expediency of the Chair being now abolished, it would, in the event of your entertaining the question at all, be your duty to dissuade them from such a measure.

I must now bring the present Letter to a close. In the discussion of the general question at issue, I have most carefully abstained from noticing several topics of an irritating character, which the recent proposal of the Medical Faculty respecting the Pathology chair, is calculated to suggest, and upon which, on a suitable occasion, I should have been most desirous fully and freely to express my sentiments. But I have been unwilling to endanger any force which the preceding arguments might appear to you to possess, by intermingling with them such observations as, had I entered at all on these unpleasant topics, it would have been impossible for me to abstain from making. I shall only add, that, whoever the person may be who shall be selected by the Patrons to fill the Chair of General Pathology, that circumstance will make no alteration in my opinions with regard to the propriety of its creation and maintenance.

I have the honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

WILLIAM THOMSON, M. D.

80 GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH,

25th July 1837.

P.S.—As I was bringing these observations to a conclusion, I had the pleasure to receive a letter from my friend Dr SHARPEY, Professor of General Anatomy and Physiology in the University College, London, a portion of which I cannot deny myself the gratification of submitting to your perusal. To you I need not say, that an opinion expressed by Professor SHARPEY upon such a subject is eminently entitled to respect, not only from his knowledge of the different departments of medical science, his acquaintance with the practice of foreign schools, and his personal experience in teaching, but also from his candour, and the well known soundness of his understanding.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

LONDON, 20th July 1837.

“ Since I received your letter requesting an expression of my opinion as to your qualifications for the office of Professor of General Pathology in the University of Edinburgh, I have learned that a majority of the Medical Faculty of the University have advised the Patrons to abolish the Chair. Believing that such a measure, if adopted, would deprive students of a most valuable source of instruction, I cannot refrain, though unasked, from expressing my decided conviction of its inexpediency. Pathology has always appeared to me to be one of the most important branches of Medical Study, comprehending as it does those general facts and reasonings respecting the diseased conditions of the economy, which may be said to constitute the principles or elements of Medicine, the systematic study of which prepares the student to pass on with the greatest advantage to the classes of Practice of Physic and Surgery. It is true, that Pathology was, to a certain extent, long and successfully taught in Edinburgh, in conjunction with Physiology as part of the Institutions of Medicine, but, independently of other considerations which it would be easy to point out, the increase in

extension and importance acquired by these two branches in recent years, and especially the vast and most valuable accessions to Pathology derived from Pathological Anatomy, are reasons more than sufficient to justify the establishment of a separate class of Pathology. Nor have we less reason to expect advantage from such a separation in these, than in other departments of medical tuition, the increased importance of which has obtained for them the rank of independent branches; and in any seminary the class of Pathology may, I have no doubt, be disjoined from that of Physiology, with the same advantages that have attended the separation of the classes of Surgery and Anatomy, or those of Materia Medica and Botany.

“ I know that the Professors, in making the present recommendation, are actuated by the desire of lessening the demands on the student; but I believe it is not so much the mere extent of the education required that is complained of; it is rather the exaction of attendance in certain privileged schools, which, whether justly or not, is considered oppressive; and the abolition of the Class of Pathology, while it must shut up a valuable source of knowledge, would prove but a very trifling abatement of the alleged grievance. At any rate if, on this ground, it were judged expedient to narrow the course of study, and if utility be the criterion which is to determine what classes should be retained, the Profession generally would not, I am convinced, recommend to the Patrons to begin their reductions with Pathology.

“ In thus freely speaking my mind on this subject, I care little though I may perhaps be accused of presumption for giving an opinion to which little weight may be attached; but I confess it is most painful to me to find myself so much opposed, even on a single point of importance, to men, some of whom I count among my best and most intimate friends, and on whose judgment I am accustomed to place the utmost reliance. Nevertheless, I feel that I could not candidly ex-

press my opinions respecting your qualifications, without at the same time unhesitatingly declaring my sentiments as to the proposal for abolishing the Chair of General Pathology, and I know, that, with reasonable men, my frankness in stating an opposing opinion will give no offence.

*

*

*

*

I am, my dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours,

W. SHARPEY."

